

Identification and Clarification

What are the Jinn?

The Jinn are a world of their own, different from that of the humans or the angels. They do, however, possess some characteristics in common with humans, such as the ability to think and reflect. Similarly, they also have the ability to choose between the path of good and the path of evil in the same manner as humans. They, though, differ from humans in other characteristics, including one very important characteristic: Their origin.

They are called *jinn* (جن) because they are obscured from human sight,

إِنَّهُ يَرْنَكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ

مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ^{٢٧}

“Lo! He sees you, he and his tribe, from whence you see him not”
(*al-Araaf* 27) .

Their Origin

Allah has informed us that the jinn have been created from fire as He says in the Quran,

وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَارِ السَّمُومِ

“And the jinn did we create aforetime of essential fire” (*al-Hijr* 27). In *surah al-Rahmaan* (verse 15), He says,

وَخَلَقَ الْجَانَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّنْ نَّارٍ

“And the jinn He did create of a smokeless flame of fire.” According to Ibn Abbaas, Ikrimah, Mujaahid, Al-Hasan and others the meaning of *marajin-min-nar*, is “the extremity of the flame,” and in one narration it is described as the purest and best (of fire).¹ An-Nawawi said in his commentary to *Sahih Muslim*, “The smokeless flame of fire is that mixed with the blackness of the fire.”

In a hadith recorded by Muslim on the authority of Aisha, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

خُلِقَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ نُورٍ وَخُلِقَ الْجَانُّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِنْ نَّارٍ وَخُلِقَ آدَمُ مِمَّا
وُصِفَ لَكُمْ

“The angels were created from light, the jinn were created from a smokeless flame of fire and Adam was created from what has been described to you [by Allah in the Quran].”

When were they created?

There is no doubt that the jinn were created before mankind, as Allah says,

¹ See *Al-Bidayab wa an-Nibayab*, vol. 1, p. 59.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَلٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٦﴾
وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَارِ السَّمُومِ

“Verily We created man of potter’s clay of dark mud altered. And the Jinn did We create aforetime of a flameless fire” (*al-Hijr* 26-27). This verse clearly states that the jinn were created before mankind. Some of the earlier scholars were of the opinion that they were created a thousand years before mankind, but for that statement they have no proof in either the Quran or the sunnah.

The Names for the Jinn in the Arabic language

Ibn Abdul Barr said, “The jinn, according to the scholars of the language, are of different types:

1. If one is mentioning the jinn purely of themselves, they are called *jinni* (جني).

2. If one is mentioning the jinn that live among mankind, they are called *aamar* (عامر) whose plural is *amaar* (عمار).

3. If one is mentioning the ones that antagonize the young, they are called *arwaah* (أرواح).

4. If one is mentioning the evil ones that antagonize humans they are called *shaitan* (شیطان) for the singular [and *shayateen* (شیاطین) for plural].

5. If they cause even more harm and become strong, they are called *afreet* (عفريت).

Types of Jinn

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

الجن ثلاثة أصناف فصنف يطير في الهواء وصنف حيات وكلاب
وصنف يحلون ويظعنون

“There are three types of jinn: one that flies through the air, one that are snakes and dogs, and one which stay in places and travel about.”

There is no room for the denial of the existence of the jinn

A small number of people absolutely deny the existence of another being known as jinn. Some of the polytheists claimed that the meaning of jinn was the souls of the planets.¹

Some of the philosophers claim that the jinn are the evil inclinations in the souls of mankind in the same way that the angels are the inclination for good in the souls of mankind.³

Some of the modern-day people allege that the jinn are the bacteria and microbes that modern science has recently discovered.

Muhammad al-Bahi, in his commentary on *Surah al-Jinn*, says that the jinn are the angels. To him, the jinn and angels are one existence without any difference between them. His proof is that the angels also cannot be seen by mankind. Except that he includes among the jinn those who hide from the world of human beings concerning their belief or disbelief and their good or evil.⁴

¹ This was recorded by al-Tabarani and al-Haakim and by al-Baihaqi in *Al-Asmaa wa as-Sifaat* with a *salih isnad*. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albani, *Sahih al-Jaami al-Sagheer*, vol. 3, p. 85.

² See Ahmad ibn Taimiya, *Majmu al-Fatawa*, vol. 24, p. 280.

³ See Ibid., vol. 4, p. 346.

⁴ Muhammad al-Bahi, *Tafseer Surah al-Jinn*, p. 8.

Not possessing knowledge concerning them is not a type of proof

The most that these deniers can say is that they have no knowledge concerning their existence. But not having any knowledge about them is not a proof that they do not exist.' The mind that denies everything that it does not know of certainly is blameworthy. In fact, that is a reason why Allah blames the unbelievers. Allah says in the Quran,

بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيطُوا بِعِلْمِهِ

“Nay, but they denied that, the knowledge whereof they could not compass.. .” (*Yunus* 39). This thought is a modern invention that no one should be obstinate enough to stick to. Is it permissible for man who has lived hundreds of years to reject their possibility even if a trustworthy person informs him of it? Was our lack of hearing the sounds that go on throughout the world evidence that those sounds did not exist until the radio was invented and gave us the ability to hear and confirm those sounds?

The truth of the matter

The correct position is that the jinn are a third type of being, apart from angels or humans. They are intelligent and understanding creatures; they are not philosophical accidents or germs and are not like the microorganisms. They are responsible for their actions and have been ordered by Allah to perform some deeds and to abstain from others.

¹ They cannot argue by the statement in *Sahih al-Bukhari* of ibn Abbas who denied the Messenger's speaking with the jinn. He only rejected his speaking with them and not the existence of the jinn. Furthermore, Companions other than ibn Abbas, such as ibn Masud, confirmed the Prophet's seeing of the jinn. And whoever knows something is a proof against one who does not know it.

Proofs for the correct position

1. *Mutawatir* [Undeniable agreement about their existence by different groups of people]

Ibn Taimiya says in *Majmu al-Fatawa*,

None of the different groups of Muslims have differed about the existence of the jinn, nor in the fact that Allah sent Muhammad as a messenger to them also. The majority of the different groups of the unbelievers also confirm their existence. And the people of the book from among the Jews and the Christians also accept their existence in the same way as the Muslims do, even though one may find some among them who will deny their existence, but in the same way one can find among the Muslims some who deny their existence... like the Jahamiyya and the Mutazila.¹ But the majority of the sects and their leading scholars accept their existence. This is because the reports about their existence have come in a *mutawaatir*² manner from the Prophets which necessitates automatic and certain knowledge. It is also known with certainty that they are alive, thinking and acting by choice. They have been ordered to do certain deeds and have been prohibited from certain other deeds. They are not attributes or characteristics of humans or other creatures, as some of the “atheists” claim. Since the matter of the jinn is something narrated in *mutawaatir* form from the Prophets, the scholars and masses know

¹ Thee Jahmiyyah and Mutazilah are two heretical groups that appeared in the history of Islam. The Jahmiyyah, in particular, are known for denying many of the attributes of Allah. The Mutazilah developed their own five principles of religion and accepted or rejected the aspects of faith based on those five principles.—JZ

² A *mutawaatir* manner implies that the matter has been reported in such a way, such as by so many people in each generation, that it leaves *no room for doubt or question*.—JZ

about them and no group that claims any relationship with a messenger may deny them.’

On page 13 he also wrote,

All of the groups of the Muslims acknowledge the existence of the jinn, as do the majority of the people of the book (Jews and Christians), the polytheists among the Arabs and others from the children of Ham (the son of Noah). Similarly, the majority of the Canaanites and the Greeks from the children of Yaafith believe in them. Therefore, the majority of all people accept their existence.

2. Quranic and Hadith statements about them.

[There are numerous statements in the Quran and hadith that affirm the existence of the jinn.] For example, Allah says in the Quran,

قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ

“Say (O Muhammad): It is revealed unto me that a company of the Jinn listened...” (*al-Jinn* 1). Allah also says,

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ
رَهَقًا

“And indeed (O Muhammad) individuals of mankind used to invoke the protection of individuals of the Jinn, so that they increased them in revolt” (*al-Jinn* 6).

In fact, there exist many statements about them in the Quran and hadith, and we shall mention most of them in the rest of this work, Allah willing.

¹Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo al-Fatawa*, vol. 19, p.10.

3. Eyewitness Accounts.

Many people of our times and of the previous times have witnessed something of the jinn, even though many who had seen them or who had heard them were not aware that they were jinn. They thought that they were ghosts, spirits, invisible men, creatures from outer space and so forth.

Many trustworthy narrators, of the present day and previously, have narrated events concerning them. The famous scholar of hadith, **al-Amash** said, "A jinn appeared among us. I said to him, 'What is your favorite food?' He said, 'Rice.' We brought some to him and I would see the spoon go up and down but could not see anyone. I said, 'Do you also have people of desires [and innovations] among you like what we have?' He said, 'Yes.' I said, 'What is the situation of the Rafidha [extreme Shia] among you.' He said, 'They are the worst of us.'"

Ibn Kathir wrote, after recording the above story, "I presented its chain to our teacher Abu al-Hajjaj al-Mizi. He said, 'The chain is authentic back to al-Amash.' Then he said, 'Ibn Asaakeer recorded in the biography of al-Abbas ibn Ahmad al-Dimishqi that he said, 'I heard some of the jinn recite, 'The hearts are in pain until they connect with their beloved and are with Him in any place, in the West or East; They are filled with the love of Allah, and Allah is their lord, they are connected to Allah and not to anything of his creation.'"

I [Dr. al-Ashqar] add: Many trustworthy people have told me about their speaking with the jinn and their seeing them. Allah willing, some of these events will be mentioned later in this work where we will discuss the ability of the jinn to take on different forms.

4. The source from which they were created. The messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has informed us that the angels were created from light and the jinn were created from fire. He made a distinction between their two sources. This refutes the claim of those who say that the jinn and the angels are nothing but one and the same beings.

Donkeys and Dogs see the jinn

Even though we humans do not see the jinn, some animals, like dogs and donkeys, can see them. It is recorded in *Musnad Ahmad* and *Sunan Abu Dawud* with a *sahih* chain from Jabir that the Prophet said,

إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ نُبَاحَ الْكِلَابِ وَنَهْيَقَ الْحُمْرِ بِاللَّيْلِ فَتَعَوَّدُوا بِاللَّهِ فَإِنَّهُنَّ يَرَيْنَ
مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ

“If you hear the bark of dogs or the braying of donkeys during the night, seek refuge in Allah from Satan, as they see what you do not see.” This is not strange as many scientists have confirmed that animals are capable of many things that humans are not capable of. Bees can see ultraviolet light and can also see the sun on an overcast day. An owl can see a mouse running in a crowded corn patch on a dark night.

Satan and the Jinn

Satan, which Allah mentions to us many times in the Quran, is from the world of the jinn. He used to worship Allah at the beginning of his creation. He lived among the angels in the heavens. He entered Paradise. But then he disobeyed Allah when he refused to prostrate to Adam, out of pride, arrogance and envy. Therefore Allah cast him out of from His mercy.

Satan, in the Arabic language, is a general term for any arrogant rebel. It is used, in general, for that one specific being because he was so arrogant and rebelled against his Lord.

He is called *taaghoot* in *al-Nisaa*, verse 76,

¹ *Taaghboot* can be understood to mean any false object of worship and submission.-JZ